

EXAMINING JOHN NOE'S MODEL

*The unviable alternative to the
Multiple Fulfilments of Bible Prophecy*

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Introduction

In the book, “Multiple Fulfilments of Bible Prophecy” (by Matthew Verschuur and Craig Savige, 2014), reference is made to John Noe’s 2014 paper “Unraveling the End”.

It should be noted that the proper orthography of having a macron over the letter “e” in the name “Noe” will not be observed in this work, due to that symbol being absent from the Minion typeset. The correct presentation was used in the book, “Multiple Fulfilments of Bible Prophecy”, in line with the printed form, rather than with the functionality of a word search in the electronic form in mind. This means that finding reference to John Noe in the said work will need to be found in the pdf by searching “John No” and by seeking the place in the alphabetical listing of the bibliography of that book.

The spelling “Unraveling” is American, not “Unravelling”, which is proper. This is in line with John Noe’s use of American English.

In the Multiple Fulfilments view, the four views or Schools of Bible prophecy (particularly in the Book of Revelation) are firstly resolved to a correct form, and secondly are placed as repetitions in history. This means that there is a first, Preterist fulfilment to a prophecy, then (and concurrently) a long term Historicist fulfilment, then a final Futurist fulfilment, and also and Idealist or Symbolic Word fulfilment.

Daniel is divided between a Western and an Eastern set of prophecies, so that in one (West) there is Pagan Rome, Papal Rome and Final Antichrist Rome, while in the other (East), there is Antiochus Epiphanes, Islam and Gog.

Multiple Fulfilments also promotes the idea of a literal and a spiritual interpretation to prophecies, and that Revelation has a Spiritual interpretation identified as the Symbolic Word view.

In regards to eschatological matters, the Multiple Fulfilments view rejects the idea of the Second Coming in the first century, as taught by full, early date Preterists. It does, however, embrace elements of Postmillennialism, by pointing to an end time world revival, called the Church Restitution. It also keeps the same basic overview that a Premillennial Dispensationalist holds to in regards to the Translation of the Saints (the Rapture), seven years Tribulation, Second Coming, thousand year Millennium and Final Judgment.

John Noe seems to be associated with Madison Park Church of God (Holiness tradition, not Armstrongite). Noe runs the Prophecy Reformation Institute, is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society and the author of a number of books.

The 9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation

John Noe is a signatory to a document, hosted on his website, which states the following theses with the aim of sparking the next Reformation.

“1. Everything Jesus said would happen, happened exactly as and when He said it would — within the lifetime of his contemporaries.”

This immediately establishes the School of Preterism as the measure by which all Bible prophecy is measured. The wording seems to constrain not only the fulfilment of the prophecies to the first century, but even the Second Coming.

By Noe signing this document, he would immediately would disqualify his own work, because the view that Jesus is yet to return is surely both obvious as a fact, and essential to the views which he attempts to synthesise.

In the Multiple Fulfilments view, the return of Christ is future, and did not occur in 70 AD.

“2. Everything every New Testament writer expected to happen, happened exactly as and when they expected it would — within their lifetime — as they were guided into all truth and told the things that were to come by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:13).”

This, as the previous point, seems to annihilate any present or future expectancy. Yet the signatories seek another, new Reformation. One that has no basis in Bible prophecy. This is absurd in the extreme, because they are therefore seeking something in which they can supply no Biblical basis for believing.

Whereas the Multiple Fulfilments view does allow for a coming restoration, the Church Restitution, which can be considered to be the next Reformation.

“3. Scholars across a broad spectrum are in general agreement that this is exactly how every NT writer and the early Church understood Jesus’ words. If they were wrong on something this important, how can we trust them to have conveyed other aspects of the faith accurately, such as the requirements for salvation?”

The argument for consensus cannot be used, for out of Church history, and in the present, there is a wide expectation for a future return of Christ, one which never occurred in the first century.

“4. No inspired NT writer, writing twenty or more years later, ever corrected their Holy Spirit-guided understanding and fulfilment expectations ...”

It is extraordinarily mistaken to read the Scripture as if the intention of the Holy Ghost is not there. Since the Holy Ghost never communicated nor intended a first century Second

Coming of Christ, such a view was clearly not fulfilled, because it was never promised.

“5. Partial fulfilment is not satisfactory. ...”

Quite rightly, the matter of prophecy must be dealt with in absolutes. There are possibly double or multiple fulfilments of certain prophecies. However, this does not in any way mean that Christ’s return had a first century fulfilment. The Multiple Fulfilment view points to only one Second Coming. It does however distinguish between the Rapture and the Armageddon coming. Also, it allows for a Symbolic Word interpretation in regards to the coming described in Revelation 19 as applying to the Scripture coming.

“6. ... Faithfulness means not only doing what was promised, but also doing it when it was promised.”

The assumption that the prophecy must only apply to the first century taints this approach. Even Noe works against it by attempting to synthesise other views in his “Unraveling the End”.

“7. 1st-century, fulfilment expectations were the correct ones and everything happened, right on time — no gaps, no gimmicks, no interruptions, no postponements, no delays, no exegetical gymnastics, and no changing the meaning of commonly used and normally understood words. Such manipulative devices have only given liberals and sceptics a foothold to discredit Christ’s Deity and the inerrancy of Scripture.”

The plain reading of Scripture that Christ’s coming and that fulfilment of many prophecies was beyond the first century. To say that this normal, well-accepted view gives a foothold for evil men to attack the Scripture is highly absurd.

In fact, what gives enemies of the Gospel ammunition is to say that the fulfilment of prophecy was limited to the first century, when clearly both the enemies and many good Christian folks can see that the prophecy was not all fulfilled then.

This is besides the Multiple Fulfilments view, which allows that there are indeed portions of prophecies which were fulfilled in the first century, and that the same prophecy can have another one or more post-first century fulfilments.

“8. What needs adjusting is our understanding of both the time and nature of fulfilment, and not manipulation of the time factor to conform to our popular, futuristic, and delay expectations.”

The idea of a future Second Coming is entirely consistent with the Scripture, and any individual problems of some parts of views (such as the delay of the Futurist seventieth week) are resolved and refuted by a proper approach.

It is the Multiple Fulfilments view which allows an immediate or first fulfilment, as well as a distant future fulfilment, unlike any other model, whether the eclectic part-and-part approach, the (somewhat correct) near and far dual or double fulfilment approach or the (somewhat correct) germinant approach.

“9. The kingdom of God was the central teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a present but greatly under-realised reality, and must again become the central teaching of his Church.”

This asserts a sort of Amillennialism with no distinctive yet to come feature, nor does it supply any concrete view of the future. To assert that Christians are living in some sort of age of glory (i.e. during Papal persecutions, infidel scepticisms and so on) is naive in the extreme.

Thesis 9.5 basically argues for an “always reforming” Church, that Christians (or the group who made the document) have been guilty of proclaiming a half-truth.

In short, these theses are uninspiring and tragic, they do not inspire any Reformation, and they are quite wrongheaded.

There is coming the Church Restitution, but the pure King James Bible and the Pentecostal knowledge of the Spirit are the basis, which is to produce the fruits of correct doctrine.

Noe’s analysis of the Dispensational Premillennial view

Noe lists several strengths and weaknesses. Among the weaknesses, he lists “Positing the time of Christ’s ‘Second Coming’ and ‘Return’ as being very soon.” In the Multiple Fulfilments view, the Translation of the Saints is viewed as fairly soon, but requires still the fulfilment of a few prophecies, such as, the Gog invasion and the Church Restitution. This does not, of course, give any ability to predict the day and hour of Christ’s return.

The next criticism he makes is, “Interrupting divine time frames without clear textual justification.” This is unwarranted, since the text of the Scripture clearly stipulates numbers, such as, 1260 days. Various references to these numbers give authority to the argument for a seven year Tribulation.

The next weakness he points to is “Arbitrary use of gaps of time.” The idea that Daniel’s 70th week is deferred into the future is indeed a just criticism.

Noe then states, “Bifurcating passages of Scripture, including the Book of Revelation.” This hardly counts as a point, since interpretation should be dealt with, not just an instant

dismissal. In the Multiple Fulfilments view, the Futurist view is a viable and equal partner.

The next point is “Interpreting by exception and specialised meanings — i.e., ignoring or changing the meaning of commonly used and normally understood words in the time statements.” This reveals the bias of the critic rather than proper analysis. Clearly, Noe is committed to his own Preterist interpretation to the entire and special degradation of the Futurist view. There is no spirit of charity, no attempted synthesis, but outright hostility (which he implies that he deplores) toward the Futurist School.

He then criticises Futurism for “Postulating postponement of the kingdom of God.” This is strange, in that all manner of writers and theologians identify a future, yet to come “Kingdom” or form of the Kingdom. The extreme Amillennialist may claim that the Kingdom has fully come, but such a view really is not only totally blind to reality and the Scripture promises, but also may border on heresy.

Next is, “Postulating delay theory.” This is a repetition of an earlier point.

Then comes, “Advocating a future 7-year period of tribulation.” This is no weakness, but entirely Biblical.

Noe then implies falsehood on the part of the Futurist, saying, “Inventing the ‘Rapture’ idea in direct contradiction of Scripture.” This is a contentious issue. The Multiple Fulfilments view accepts that the doctrine of the Rapture is in the Scripture. But Noe should be careful, since a Second Coming in 70 AD is an invented idea in direct contradiction of Scripture.

He then says, “Identifying Daniel’s 70th week with Jesus’ Olivet Discourse.” This is a strange accusation, in that the proper view

(as agreed to by many views) is that the last part of Daniel 9 is indeed talking about the fall of Jerusalem, which means that Daniel's 70th week must have a lot to do with the Olivet Discourse. The proper interpretation is that the 70th week encompasses the ministry of Christ and the early Church to the martyrdom of Stephen.

Another weakness is, "Advocating separate redemptive plans for Israel and the Church." It is correct to identify that both the Church and national Israel are mentioned in prophecy, but it is incorrect to divide the salvation of Israel from the Church. The Multiple Fulfillments view emphasises the conversion into spiritual Israel of natural Israel.

Another just criticism is, "Denigrating the Church as unforeseen and a parenthesis in God's redemptive plan." In fact, the Church was God's plan all along.

And further, "Advocating a future restoration of the old and inferior Judaic order." In fact, if sacrifices are to be literally made, and observances literally held in the Millennium, they should not be viewed as Mosaic. It is likely that hostility for this particular idea, however, stems from anti-authoritarianism and the rejection of formal ceremony from certain Protestant groups.

Noe then criticises, "A dichotomising hermeneutic based upon a false paradigm — i.e., the Israel-Church distinctive." While it is incorrect to divide sharply, as though there is a different salvation for Jews, it is correct to identify promises which can be applied distinctively, such as that the Jews should be converted.

The next so-called weakness actually seems to be a heretical view being espoused by Noe. He writes, "Advocating an incomplete salvation and resurrection reality." The Scripture actually states, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it

doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2).

The final point is, “Positing a negative worldview and short-term outlook for our present time.” Christians should have a negative view of the world and sin, but not of the Gospel. Defeatism is not the correct approach, because it is essentially faithless.

Noe’s analysis of the Amillennial view

Noe’s biases make his view unbalanced. He lists the weaknesses of the Amillennial view, but it is the strengths he lists that should be examined. He begins, “Idealist interpretation of the Book of Revelation.” This is not exclusively an Amillennialist distinctive, and further, there are so many varying Idealist views, that to lavish praise on Amillennialism based on Idealism becomes absurd.

Amillennialism is false, because it takes away the prophecy of Revelation 20 as having any concrete reality. Idealism can only be good and right in a limited, secondary form, that is, that it comes after a literal interpretation. The Multiple Fulfilments view identifies the Symbolic Word interpretation.

Noe claims that Amillennialism is good because of its “Emphasis on the literal/unseen realities behind symbolic fulfilment.” Again, the recognition of the symbolic fulfilment does not require Amillennialism, and in the Multiple Fulfilments view, the Symbolic Word interpretation is there, without reference to Amillennialism.

The next supposed strength is “Recognition that the ‘last days’ existed in the first century.” This has nothing specifically to do with Amillennialism, but is the view of Preterism, Historicism and the Multiple Fulfilments view. The last days begin with the

Roman Empire, making the birth of Christ and the reign of Augustus the beginning of the last days.

He says, “The present reality of the kingdom of Christ.” The problem is that Christ is not actually reigning on earth, but through the hearts of believers, therefore it is a grave mistake to think that believers are living in the “realised kingdom” today.

Noe then lists, “Rejection of the idea of a future kingdom.” This is no strength but absurdity, for if there is no age to come, no kingdom, then the Scripture has lied when it says, “Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Finally he claims that Amillennialism “Attempts to honour both literal and figurative language.” This is not true, in that the Amillennialist does not admit nor allow a literal millennium, and therefore cannot be said to honour the literal language of Scripture. Nor does it properly interpret the figurative language, since it does not interpret the same passage (Revelation 20) as applying to an end time Church Restitution.

Noe’s analysis of the Postmillennial view

Noe attacks the Postmillennial view for “Positing the time of Christ’s ‘Second Coming’ and ‘Return’ as being far away.” While it is true that Christ’s coming is soon, there are certain things which must be fulfilled prior to that time.

“Insistence the world must be ‘Christianised’ to a significant degree before Christ can return.” This is actually in line with a large list of Scriptures, and while the exact Postmillennial view may be criticised, it is right and proper to expect great inroads being made by the Gospel prior to the return of Christ.

Noe claims, “Adherence to an unscriptural ‘end-of-time’ paradigm.” Of course, the “end time” view is correct, in that Jesus really is to return, so it is supremely Scriptural.

He then says, “Use of a dichotomising hermeneutic based on that paradigm.” It is not overt what Noe means, but he seems to be indicating a rejection of the idea that the Jewish nation also should be saved as a specific focus of Bible prophecy.

Like Premillennialism, Noe rejects Postmillennialism for the following, “Claim that eschatology pertains to the end of the Christian age.” And, “Postulating two or more parousia returns of Christ.” And, “Postulating a final coming and last judgment, after which no more.” The Multiple Fulfilment view is very specific: there is a Rapture, and then there is the Second Coming, after which is the thousand years. The future coming of Christ is explicitly stated in Revelation (which was written after 70 AD).

He then discusses “Numerous partial-preterist inconsistencies from failure to fully honour the time statements.” When and where Postmillennialists do take that approach, it is to be rejected, but the proper Multiple Fulfilments view answers such issues.

To say “Bifurcating passages of Scripture, including the Book of Revelation.” is pointless and nonsensical, as wrong as saying, “It is wrong because I do not agree or like it”.

Noe also chides Postmillennialism, like Premillennialism, of “Reliance on delay theory.”, “Insistence that the time of fulfilment cannot be known.”, “Advocating an incomplete salvation and resurrection reality.” and “Advocating a future evil-less, utopian, and eternal state on earth.” Since millenarianism is correct, based on Scripture, then to reject this view is actually to reject parts of Scripture. Scripture states, “And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached

unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20, 21). That restitution has not occurred because Christ has not returned.

Noe’s analysis of the Preterist view

Unlike the other Millennial views, Noe interacts with a School of Bible interpretation. He likes Preterism because it “Fully accepts the natural reading and understanding of eschatological timeframes and NT time and imminency statements, including those bracketing the entire prophecy of Revelation.” While the Multiple Fulfilments view accepts the Preterist interpretation, it does not accept that all of Revelation (e.g. chapters 18 to 22) have a Preterist fulfilment.

He says that Preterism, “Supports the 1st-century Holy Spirit-guided expectations as the correct ones.” In fact, the Holy Ghost has not guided to a Preterist view to the exclusion of Historicism and Futurism. The fact that many true and sincere Christians hold to other views already should indicate that the natural reading and Christian understanding cannot automatically be assumed to be just Preterist. In fact, readings regarding the visible second coming seem to be literal and future, and therefore not to be read as somehow locked to a Preterist timeframe and figurative language.

Noe says that Preterism, “Balances literal and figurative language for nature of fulfilment.” It is at this point that the true nature of Noe’s error can be revealed. There are three Millennial views and four prophetic interpretation Schools. Because he supports a Preterist-Amillennialism, he effectively doubles his side, and unbalances his own attempted “reconciliation” of the views, by treating “Preterism” and “Amillennialism” as separate, when in fact, he holds to “Preterist-Amillennialism”, and does not effectively allow nor

properly seem to admit to the validity of the visible actual future Second Coming.

Preterism “Uses biblical precedent to explain the nature of fulfilment.” Indeed, the same applies in other Schools also. Preterism is not the only School that says that the diminishing of the sunlight or the moon turning to blood can be figurative. Therefore this is not a Preterist distinctive.

Noe says that it “Harmonises time convergence of OT time prophecies with NT time statements and Holy Spirit-led expectations.” In this means that his assumption is that the Scripture applies to the first century, and that this was the Holy Ghost’s intention. The problem is that at present, the Holy Ghost speaks of the future, and that many Christians validly point to the real Second Coming as yet future according to the Scripture.

He upholds a view which “Recognises that eschatology is connected to Israel and pertains to the end of the Jewish age.” And that, “Affirms that God has always had only one, continuous, by-faith people.” This presumes that the Israel promises apply to the Jewish Christians in the first century. However, there is much to question in this. First, that all Israel (the Jews) are to be saved is yet to be fulfilled (see Romans 11:26). Second, that the Gentiles and Jews are distinguished in the New Testament, saying that all must come part of spiritual Israel to be saved, where only there is “no Jew nor Gentile”.

Rather absurdly he says that Preterism “Posits a positive worldview, long-term outlook.” Both reality and doctrine shows this to be incorrect. The reality is that there has been a lot of troubles, persecutions and evil since 70 AD. Doctrinally, it is the Postmillennialist and the Premillennialist which have their forms of a “positive ... long-term outlook”, the very views which Noe attacks.

Noe's view, however, descends into the bizarre, when he says, Preterism "Acknowledges that God's material creation is without end." That is not a Preterist doctrine, but may be Noe's false doctrine. Clearly, Noe is a Universalist, which is a grave and gross error. The idea of a perpetual physical universe is anti-Scriptural and evil beyond all, since the Scripture repeatedly speaks of the "end" and the burning up and conflagration of creation.

Noe finally claims that his view, "Answers the liberal/sceptic attack on the Bible and on Christ, effectively." In fact, his view is more in line with rationalism, liberal theology, higher criticism and unbelief than others. It is well known that Preterism was in fact adopted by the liberal/sceptics because they did not want to admit that there was a future judgment.

Concluding issues

Noe began from Preterism, and using Idealism, failed to synthesise or reconcile the other Schools. Whereas the Multiple Fulfilments view began with Historicism, and accommodated all the Schools separately with it.

Noe thinks that prophecies were all fulfilled in the first century, and therefore rejects the important doctrine of Multiple Fulfilments, since he avowedly rejects double fulfilments, double sense, near/far perspectives and types in prophecy, though allowing for a "fuller sense" fulfilment that only applies within Idealism.

It is only the Multiple Fulfilments view which can correctly assess and synthesise Preterism with the other Schools of prophecy, as well as to adapt Postmillennial elements with a Premillennial model.